

Don't Wait For Students To Ask: Student Engagement and Transfer Best Practices

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STLCC Assessment Vision

St. Louis Community College collects and uses assessment data to improve student learning, academic achievement, and overall institutional effectiveness. When combined with thoughtful interpretation by faculty and staff, assessment supports the overall decision-making needs of the College and the specific decision-making needs of individual units and programs.

STLCC Mission-Based Assessment Framework

The I DID Approach

- **INQUIRE—What Do We Want To Know?**
Define the specific program/mission area(s) or student learning outcome to be assessed.
- **DISCOVER—What Do We Know?**
Identify data sources and methods of assessment, and collect assessment data.
- **INTERPRET—What Does The Information Tell Us?**
Analyze and share the results of the data.
- **DEVELOP—What Actions Do We Plan To Take?**
Use results to design strategies to improve student learning and institutional effectiveness.

St. Louis Community College

Transfers To UMSL

- STLCC to UMSL transfers represent the largest number of transfers between any two Missouri public institutions. For fall 2007, 646 STLCC students transferred to UMSL.
- Larry Westermeyer and UMSL have developed an excellent data exchange system that allows community colleges to assess their students' performance at UMSL.
- The STLCC transfer cumulative GPA (end of fall 2007 term) is 2.73, while the UMSL native student cumulative GPA is 2.88.
- 84 % of STLCC transfer students received a grade of A-C in their upper division courses, while 86 % of the UMSL native students received a grade of A-C in their upper division courses.
- Data also revealed that less than one-third of the STLCC to UMSL transfers completed the AA degree.

UMSL Office of Transfer Services and Articulation

Mission Statement

The mission of the Office of Transfer Services and Articulation is two-fold: retention and recruitment of current and new students. The office is committed to promoting and facilitating the positive engagement and successful integration into the UMSL student body of all transfer students and to craft seamless program-to-program articulation between UMSL and MO two-year institutions, that working in tandem, create clear pathways to academic success for transfer students.

Vision Statement

The Office of Transfer Services and Articulation will promote and facilitate the positive engagement and successful integration into the UMSL student body of all transfer students. The Office offers support services to meet the unique needs of the transfer students; serves as a clearing house for prospective, new, and current transfer students, returning students and non traditional students seeking assistance with campus referrals and campus resources; and demonstrates a friendly welcoming and empathetic atmosphere to all visitors.

Resources/Programming for Students

- New Student Orientation (both on / off campus and online)
- Academic Strategies and skill building workshops and courses
- (w/ CSS)
- PreView UMSL Days (including faculty interaction)
- UMSL transfer coordinators
- Pre-evaluation of transcripts
- Email newsletter
- Peer mentors
- Community college outreach events and workshops
- Sponsor of Tau Sigma National Honor Society

Assessing STLCC's Transfer “Mission”

Transfer Education Assessment 2007 - 2008

Inquire

The STLCC Transfer Assessment Committee will focus on the degree to which students are using advisors, counselors, and faculty to help them make the transition from STLCC to UMSL.

Discover

The committee decided to utilize a survey and focus groups. A random sample of STLCC students who were new transfers to UMSL in fall 2006 were surveyed in June 2007.

The focus group research was conducted in spring 2008. Three cohorts of students participated in the focus groups: STLCC new transfers to UM-St. Louis in fall 2007; STLCC transfers who had completed 30-45 credit hours at UMSL; and STLCC transfers who were planning to graduate from UMSL in spring 2008.

Key Findings, New Transfer Student Survey

- 50% of the students were very satisfied with their transfer preparation, 23% were more than satisfied, and 20% were satisfied.
- Approximately one-third reported that they lost STLCC credit hours at the 100-level or above when transferring.
- 21% of the students indicated they did not obtain any transfer advice from an STLCC employee
- 35% of the students indicated they did not obtain any transfer advice from a university employee.
- In a recent survey of fall new students, 38% reported that they did not meet with an advisor during their first 4 weeks on campus. 83% reported that they rarely or never obtained transfer advice any time during their first semester.

Key Findings, New Transfer Student Survey

- 42% reported transferring with the AA degree, 14% transferred with 60 STLCC hours but no degree, 8% transferred with 45-59 STLCC hours, 20% transferred with 30-44 STLCC hours, and 16% transferred with less than 30 STLCC hours.
- 87% of the students reported that their university GPA is the same or higher than their STLCC GPA
- If they had to start over, 58% of the students said they would definitely start again with STLCC and 28% said they would probably start again with STLCC and then transfer.

Student Focus Group Questions

1. Were you satisfied with how your education at STLCC prepared you for transfer to UMSL? Probe for why and/or why not.
2. What were your experiences transferring 100 level and above courses from STLCC to UMSL? Were such experiences consistent with what you were told? If problems, probe for specific academic areas and/or problems with advice.
3. Who, if anyone provided you with transfer advice? [STLCC faculty or staff; UMSL faculty or staff]. Overall, how would you rate the advice you received? [For those who indicated they did not receive any advice, ask them how that is working out.]
4. If you could give advice to someone thinking about transferring from STLCC to UMSL what would you tell them to do to have a successful transfer experience?

Student Focus Group Questions

5. Did you transfer with or without an Associate Degree from St. Louis Community College? If possible, explore with both groups their reason for transferring with or without the degree.
6. In a recent survey of STLCC to UMSL transfer students, the majority of those students indicated that their UMSL GPA was the same or better than their STLCC GPA. Is this your experience or not? How would you explain your change in GPA?
7. If you could start your higher education experience again, would you still start with STLCC and transfer to UMSL? [If possible, get them to discuss why they started with STLCC.]

Case #1

[Recent Transfer, new in fall 07]

“I made a big effort to talk to the counselors at the community college several times and look at the transfer sheet. I made an appointment here to talk to the counselors. I went to the transfer date. I did everything I could to make it smooth and I probably took about 30 hours more than I needed which is ridiculous to spend that money and time. I was totally guided in the wrong direction. I should have not taken an associates degree. I should have had one person knowledgeable at both the community college and UMSL. I always had the intention of getting a B or A and should have had the requirements given to me the first time I asked.”

Case #2

[Established Transfers, 30 – 45 credits hrs at UMSL]

“My experience was fine. My professor was in constant communication with UMSL, letting us know what we needed to do. He was on top of any changes and informed us.”

“My general transfer was smooth, but at STLCC it seemed to me you were on your own. There was a box with a list of courses. You would ask them for help and they would give you the same information you already had. You had to figure out which classes you needed yourself.”

Case #2

[Established Transfers]

“I earned my associates degree from STLCC and when I came here and started to review classes that had been transferred but not accepted, I was quite surprised. What I discovered was the counselors at STLCC were only concerned with me earning my associates degree. They didn’t seem to want to know what my future was going to be. Since I’m on the GI bill, I’m not going to stop at two years. I was a bit disappointed that I lost four classes from STLCC coming here.”

Case #3

[Graduating Transfers, graduating in spring '08]

“I worked with a counselor from here (UMSL) named _____. Each semester I would meet with him to make sure that I was going to be prepared class wise and to know what was going to go on when I came here to be sure I had all the credits I needed to come here.”

“My advisor actually was an employee of UMSL, stationed at STLCC. When I did my actual transition, it was no problem. As far as the credits coming in there was no problem. Both schools did an excellent job on that.”

Student Focus Group Results

Interpret (by STLCC Transfer Education Assessment Committee)

- Many students do not use advising services as much as we at the college would like, but a good portion of those who did transfer had sought advice at both the community college and at UMSL.
- Students perceive themselves to be just as prepared if not better prepared than native students at UMSL, a finding which is consistent with last year's assessment of GPA's.
- Students who perceive themselves as having a successful transfer are self-motivated to facilitate the process. Some reported that even though they might have heard differing stories about what would and would not transfer, even from the same department, they still found their way.
- Students claimed that many capstone and cornerstone courses do not transfer to UMSL. Thus, articulation agreements are sometimes not honored for our transfer students.

STLCC Transfer Education Assessment 2007 - 2008

Develop

1. Using advising, and thus increasing the chance of eventual transfer, has to be a part of every first-time, degree-seeking student's orientation.
2. Require each first-time, degree-seeking student to see an advisor either in their first semester, or maybe twice in the first year.
3. Seeing an advisor as a component of COL 020 (Orientation and Study Skills) was suggested.
4. Perhaps the college could require an orientation ceremony or speech that all first-time, degree-seeking students must attend.
5. Perhaps there could be a mentoring program with successfully transferred UMSL students helping or advising new community college students.

Comments & Questions



Contacts & Resources

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- STLCC Institutional Research & Planning Assessment Toolbox
<http://collegeweb.stlcc.edu/assessment/> [note: restricted access]
- STLCC Assessment Public Site
http://www.stlcc.edu/Faculty_and_Staff_Resources/Assessment/
- University of Missouri – St. Louis Office of Transfer Services,
<http://www.umsl.edu/~transfer/>